



# Military Learning for Credit Act

Senators Chris Coons and Joni Ernst

Academic credits play a key role for every college student whose goal is to earn a degree. They help measure students' progress towards their degree and, along with Grade Point Average, academic success. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is the awarding of academic credit for activity done outside of the traditional university, college, or academic setting, such as employment or military training. By law, institutions of higher education (IHEs) are required to review student veterans' joint services transcript, which document the prior military learning and training of a veteran. Colleges and universities are actively recruiting veterans and are receiving \$10 billion a year from the GI bill funds that veterans collectively spend. However, schools are not required to actually grant any credit for prior military learning—and, research shows many IHEs do not.

A 2015 Student Veterans of America study found that only 35.72% of over 1300 respondents reported receiving at least one academic credit for their military training. Of the students who reported receiving credit for training, the median number of credits awarded was 3.0 credits, which is generally just a single class of credits. Granting college credit for military training can be an important lever for increasing veteran graduation rates. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) has found that a student that is able to receive prior learning credits is **two and a half times** more likely to graduate than a student who doesn't have PLA credits.

The Military Learning for Credit Act is a small, but significant step toward giving more veterans an opportunity to translate the military training they received into college credit. Specifically, the Military Learning for Credit Act:

- Expands to all veterans the eligibility to use veterans educational assistance funds to cover up to \$500 of the fees required to take the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the Dantes Subject Standardized Test Program (DSST) credit exams, which are a group of standardized tests that assess college-level knowledge in 38 subject areas. These tests are accepted by thousands of IHEs and provide a mechanism for earning college credits without taking college courses.
- Expands to all veterans the eligibility to use veterans educational assistance funds to cover up to \$500 of the fees required to take the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) Examination, which measures and certifies the essential work skills needed for success in jobs across industries and occupations. Thousands of private and public employers now ask for or require NCRC scores as part of their application process.
- Allows all student veterans to use veterans educational assistance funds towards portfolio assessments. At some institutions, students have the option to develop portfolios to document their prior military learning. Portfolios generally include a written narrative and supporting documentation that explain the student's learning and how it is aligned with college-level course content. Often, veterans who believe they have not received sufficient credits for the full extent of their military learning will decide to pursue portfolio assessment because the review of their prior learning is often more thorough. This bill allows veterans to help defray these costs of these assessments.
- Is structured to charge a veterans' educational assistance monthly entitlement on a pro-rated basis, meaning the veteran's monthly GI benefit will only be charged for the actual cost of the examination.
- Has the potential to save the federal government money by shortening the time to degree for student veterans who are able to take and pass these exams and earn credits.

The legislation does not authorize any new funds, but provides another use for existing veteran educational assistance entitlements.

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